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INVESTIGATORY HEARING  
REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ABINGTON TOWNSHIP, MONTGOMERY COUNTY

November 21 - 22 - 23, 1977

PENNSYLVANIA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

Milton J. Shapp, Governor

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Joseph X. Yaffe, Chairperson

MARCH 31, 1978





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I. STATUTORY AUTHORITY OF PENNSYLVANIA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION  
FOR INVESTIGATORY HEARING INTO PROBLEMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION  
AND RACIAL TENSION

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LEGAL BASIS

The Investigatory Hearing was conducted by the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission pursuant to the authority stated in the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, Act of October 27, 1955, P.L. 744, as amended, 43 P.S. §951 et seq.

Section 6 - There shall be, and there is hereby established in the Governor's Office a non-partisan, administrative Commission for the administration of this Act, which shall be known as the "Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission," and which is hereinafter referred to as the "Commission."

Section 7 - Powers and Duties of the Commission

(f.1) To investigate where no complaint has been filed, but with the consent of at least eight of the members of the Commission any problem of racial discrimination with the intent of avoiding and preventing the development of racial tension.

Section 8.1 - Whenever any problem of racial discrimination or racial tension arises, the Commission may immediately hold an investigatory hearing. The place of any such hearing shall be in the county where the problem exists. The hearing may be public or private and the Commission shall have the same powers as provided in clause (g) for hearings on complaints filed.

The purpose of the hearing shall be to resolve the problem promptly by the gathering of all the facts from all the interested parties and making such recommendations as may be necessary.





The Commission shall not be bound by the strict rules of evidence prevailing in courts of law or equity. The testimony taken at the hearing shall be under oath and be transcribed.

Should the recommendation of the Commission not be accepted within a reasonable time the Commission may, with the consent of eight members, on its own behalf initiate a complaint and the hearing findings and Commission order shall proceed the same as where a complaint has been filed.

#### COMMISSION ACTION

The Commission at its September 26, 1977, meeting voted (9-0) to conduct the investigatory hearing in Abington Township, Pennsylvania.

#### HEARING PROCEDURES

The opening public session of the investigatory hearing was held on November 21, 1977, in the Roslyn Elementary School. The remaining public sessions were held on November 22 and 23, 1977, in the Abington Township Firehouse.

Upon convening the hearing, Joseph X. Yaffe, Chairperson of the Commission and presiding as Chairperson of the Hearing Panel, set forth the hearing procedure as follows: "The method of proceeding is simply that we call various witnesses who have been subpoenaed to appear here to give such testimony and factual information as they may have regarding the racial tension in their area." The Chairperson stated that in addition to those persons subpoenaed to testify, other persons wishing to present testimony should contact Commission staff who would advise the Commission's General Counsel.

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The Commission's General Counsel, Sanford Kahn, examined the witnesses. Members of the Hearing Panel supplemented the inquiry by raising appropriate questions for response and open discussion.

The testimony under oath was presented by 35 witnesses, including five persons who testified in private session.

Witnesses included borough officials; county, state and federal representatives; school administrators; representatives of community organizations; individual citizen leaders and parents.

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## II. BACKGROUND OF RACIAL TENSION IN ABINGTON TOWNSHIP

### A. Historical Housing Patterns in Abington Township

Abington Township has historically been divided by Old York Road into two communities. Lying east of Old York Road are the communities of Rydal, Meadowbrook and Huntingdon Valley where recent housing sales indicate prices generally start at \$50,000. This area contains about 70% of the Township's total land use.

Thirty percent (30%) of the Township lying west of Old York Road contains 60% of the Township's population and includes the communities of Glenside, Willow Grove, Ardsley, North Hills, Crestmont and Roslyn. Housing in these communities, based on recent sales, generally ranges between \$35,000 and \$50,000.

Some integration has occurred in the more affluent eastern section of the Township; more has occurred in the Western section where the lower priced homes have attracted many middle income families including Black families in recent years. The harassment and terroristic activities against Black and Jewish families, which is the concern of these hearings, has occurred according to the testimony for the most part, in the community of Roslyn. Roslyn has traditionally been perceived as an all White community bordered by Crestmont which has contained a large Black population for over one hundred years. Crestmont continues to have a low housing turnover compared to other areas.

The Commission has been receiving reports that Black families were harassed and terrorized by Whites for several years, but recent sales of homes to Blacks in previously all White areas has escalated those





reports. While there has been previous racial incidents in Abington Township's western section, the Commission has more recently learned during subsequent investigation of hostilities directed toward Jewish families in this area including the incidents reported herein.

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## B. History of Racial Tensions in Abington Township

Montgomery County, including Abington Township, historically had Black and Jewish residents and the patterns of interaction and intergroup conflicts generally followed national patterns.

As racial and religious minority persons moved into the area, resulting in changing housing patterns, a pattern of intergroup conflicts similar to national patterns began to emerge, and in 1972 the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission began to receive and to record complaints of tension situations.

Commission staff responded to an early complaint in connection with serious disturbances in the schools. In 1973 complaints were recorded of harassment and vandalism against Black families moving into predominantly White neighborhoods in Roslyn. Subsequently, reports of similar incidents involving Jewish families were received.

By 1977 reports from Commission staff and from other member agencies of the Governor's Civil Tension Task Force revealed that racial tension and anti-Semitic actions had escalated to the point where victims were living in a state of virtual terror and had suffered and were continuing to suffer substantial damage to property, with no apparent hope for relief.

In response to the serious and alarming proportions of the situation, the Commission voted to conduct investigatory hearings.



### III. FINDINGS OF FACT

At the outset of this report, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission wishes to emphasize the profound impact that the testimony of the victims of these racial anti-Semitic acts had on this body. The Commission urges that readers of this report -- and the officials of the Township of Abington who are responsible in the first instance for protecting residents in the peaceful use and enjoyment of their homes -- make every effort to identify with victims of these attacks.

This report will catalog some of the acts that threaten serious physical injury and some of the acts of monstrous and obscene assault on the mind and spirit. In addition, many acts were reported that were less dramatic, such as spraying paint on cars, letting air out of tires, overturning garbage cans, throwing eggs and snow balls at houses, tearing off mail boxes; acts which in a different context might be characterized as vandalism.

But to the extent that vandalism connotes something trivial, of momentary nuisance or inconvenience, the Commission categorically rejects the use of that term in describing those acts which were directed at Black and Jewish families merely because of their status as Blacks and Jews.

In the context of this raw, ugly hate, and in light of other acts to be described; all of these racially and religiously-motivated assaults, however minor in isolation, must be considered acts of





terror. The Commission so considers them.

Upon consideration of all the testimony taken from all the interested parties during the hearings on November 21, 22 and 23, 1977, the Commission found the following:

A. MANY BLACK AND SOME JEWISH FAMILIES IN CERTAIN AREAS OF ABINGTON TOWNSHIP, FOR THE PAST YEAR OR MORE; HAVE:

(1) BEEN SUBJECTED BY WHITE PERSONS TO ACTS OF VIOLENCE AND TERROR AGAINST THEIR PERSONS AND HOMES, AND

(2) BEEN ABUSED AND HARASSED IN THE USE AND ENJOYMENT OF THEIR HOMES TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT THEY ARE BEING SUBJECTED TO RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS MOTIVATED TERRORISM, ACTS WHICH ARE OF A CONTINUING NATURE DESPITE EFFORTS OF CONCERNED CITIZENS, ORGANIZATIONS, STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES.

One Black Resident of Ardsley Testified: May 24, 1977 -- "Around ten p.m. on a warm night, we were sitting in the living room. The door was ajar and I heard a noise which I thought was our neighbors closing their door. I heard a second noise which I immediately realized was not our neighbors closing their door and just by instinct my mother jumped up and went to the door and there was a blaze. A fire in the tree which was quite near to our home on the front lawn. There was a very large cross which I am sure that you all are familiar with which has been mentioned several times tonight was wrapped in burlap. There was a gasoline can. It was propped against a tree. The tree was blazing... There was a lot of excitement. We were very excited. I just couldn't believe it -- it was incredulous."  
(Tr. November 22, 281-82)\*

(\*Tr. represents transcripts of testimony taken at the Abington Investigatory Hearing on November 21, 22 and 23).



Tuesday, June 21, 1977. A noose is found hung from a tree on a resident's front lawn. (Tr. November 22, 387)

July 9, 1977. A cross is burned on a resident's front lawn. (Tr. November 22, 188)

Mary Langley, Black Resident of Roslyn:

"In December of 1976, the week between Christmas and New Year's again around 6:30 or 7:00, my daughter was sitting at the Christmas tree playing and a big chunk of ice came through our double glass window, and the only thing that saved her was the fact that the drapes were drawn and the tree there ... All through the course of the winter we were subject to snow balls and ice being pelted at the house." (Tr. November 21, 55)

Another Black Resident of Roslyn:

"The statement was made, 'Why do you have a Black civic association? Ladies and Gentlemen, this is for protection. The question was asked 'Are you afraid of losing your life?' Yes, I am. I am very definitely afraid and I am also very definitely concerned about my children. My son lives three blocks from Willow Hills School, and yet I drive him to school every morning and my wife picks him up every afternoon. That is how concerned I am." (Tr. November 21, 135)

Edward A. Brown, Chairperson of the Eastern Montgomery County Advisory Council to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission

"One of the things that I would like to point out: I spoke on vandalism and when you address yourself to vandalism you think of broken windows and damage to cars. I can relate an incident where

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four flares were taped together and put in a lady's mail box and it looked like four sticks of dynamite. The woman was terrorized. This is not just plain vandalism, this is the kind of thing that can drive a person crazy." (Tr. November 21, 45)

Walter Pearsall, Black Resident of Willow Grove, Relating  
Incident of November 9, 1977

"A bullet was fired through the side of my house. My wife had gone over to the school. You know to a teachers' meeting and she had come home. She said she had received a good report about our daughter and she decided to go into her room and tell her about it.

When she turned the light on and as she was sitting there talking, several shots were fired outside. One of them came through the side of the house, through the drapes, and hit the head of the bed on which she was sitting. If it had been another six inches, it probably would have hit her, killed her or wounded her, or whatever." (Tr. November 21, 313-314)

Jerome Brill, a Jewish Resident of the Borough of Abington,  
Testifying About a Year of Anti-Semitic Incidents Culminating  
with the Painting of a Swastika on his Front Door on October  
31, 1977

"Q. Can you be a little more specific when you refer to the incidents about the rape of the house?"

"A. Well, there were at least four or five cars and many individuals or groups just repeatedly, at intervals threw eggs against the house. ... This went on for over an hour, on and off, possibly





for a couple of hours." ... The incidents concerning the past year, in other words, it's just a repeated pattern. We're not allowed the freedom of our streets. We are accosted verbally when we drive down the street with anti-Semitic garbage and too numerous times, really. I have documented several dates. If we were to document all of these things, I think we would be spending all of our time documenting and not really living.

"We have lived in fear. We have altered our lifestyles to adjust because of these large groups of individuals in their cars and, we want to avoid a large confrontation. So it has been a very harassing thing, too numerous to enumerate, to know where or when we are going to get it. And it has been a major problem." (Tr. November 22, 295-297)



B. ABINGTON TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS AND TOWNSHIP POLICE HAVE BEEN INEFFECTIVE IN SIGNIFICANTLY CURTAILING THE ACTS OF TERRORISTS OR APPREHENDING THE PERPETRATORS. THE COMMISSION RECOGNIZES THE POSITIVE EFFORTS OF PENNSYLVANIA REPRESENTATIVES JOSEPH HOFFEL OF ABINGTON TO INITIATE JOINT ACTION BY RESIDENTS AND TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS AND TO COORDINATE SUCH ACTIONS WITH STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

Most of the Black and Jewish victims who testified expressed current fear. Only a few arrests have been made in connection with any of the kinds of incidents previously described in Finding A. The arrests involved persons shouting racial slurs at the home of a Black resident and resulted from increased surveillance of that resident. Those arrested were charged with disorderly conduct and fined \$100.00 plus costs.

After the incident of August 1977 in which property damage of approximately \$5,000 was inflicted on the home of a Black victim, a White neighbor informed the police she saw a car pulling away from the vicinity of the Black resident's home immediately after she heard the crash of bricks hitting the home. She observed the four occupants of the car and took down the license number. The next morning she saw the same car with the same four occupants return to the same home and park there and observe the damage. She turned this information over to the police. At least two of the occupants of the car including its owner were known to police and suspected by them of being part of the "small hard-core of 'troublemakers'." Police did not question the occupants of the car, claiming that the statement of the neighbor was insufficient to establish sufficient connection even to permit questioning. (Tr. November 21, 123-130)





In the cases of Jerome Brill and other Jewish residents, police have never made arrests, although groups of five or more congregated for hours at a time on repeated occasions, throwing rocks, eggs and fire crackers and shouting anti-Semitic abuse. (See above)

In August, 1977, three White young males and a juvenile were apprehended by police after they attacked a 33-year old Black male with a metal instrument, believed to be a pipe. The attack was a vicious, unprovoked, purely racial assault. (Tr. November 22, 272) Two of the four were the same "known troublemakers" identified at the scene after the attack on the home of the Black resident cited. (See above) The adults were charged with aggravated assault and battery. The District Attorney of Montgomery County was not notified and did not appear at the Preliminary Hearing. Only the arresting patrolman was present, although it is the policy to have a police supervisor present at the hearing on a serious misdemeanor or felony. The defendants were represented by counsel. Although the victim identified all three, charges against two of the defendants were dismissed because the victim allegedly became "confused." The charges against the third were reduced to disorderly conduct and he was fined \$50.00 and required to pay \$200.00 restitution to the victim. The police officer participated in the "plea bargaining" and acquiesced or did not object to the reduction of the charge. (Tr. November 23, 80-88)

In another incident, a male juvenile was apprehended by Jimmy Lee Durham after Durham had observed the juvenile peering into several windows of his home. Prior to this, Durham and his Black neighbors had been subjected to vandalism and his children had been racially harassed.



Police were called. They acknowledged the juvenile was abusive to them when they arrived. The juvenile was never prosecuted. According to police, he accused Durham of firing a gun at him and Durham agreed to drop charges in return for the juvenile dropping his charges. Durham flatly denied having had or fired a gun or having been asked to or having agreed to drop charges. (Tr. November 22, 55-57; November 23, 35, 62)

The police officer who was called to the home of the Black victim when a group had gathered shouting "we hate niggers" told him, "you are going to have to wait it out because its going to take six to eight weeks." (Tr. November 22, 385)

A police officer who came to the home of Mrs. Langley asked her: "If people would see that your lawn was kept up and that you were not parking cadillacs out in front, things would settle down." (Tr. November 21, 60) When police came to the home of the Brill family to investigate the swastika incident, they chastised him for using a four letter word in giving vent to his feelings. (Tr. November 22, 292)



C. TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS LACK A SENSE OF URGENCY IN  
ELIMINATING EXISTING RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS  
MOTIVATED TERRORISM.

One Abington Township Commissioner testified about the harassment, terrorism and vandalism as follows: "... it's a people problem. We are going to have it forever because the people are causing the problem, the same people or element that has been causing it from the beginning of our problem way back. It is going to go on and we will have to just learn to live with it and fight it the best way that we can. Now, if the new neighbors come in, they are going to fight it ... and it is automatically going to magnify the problem and it's only going to cause more rebellion in the White community."

The same Commissioner further: "What I said was, it is going to be here forever. If you come into a community such as an all-White community ... you have to expect something to happen. I mean that it is a fact of life. I mean, we are going to have to live with it, as distasteful as it is." (Tr. November 22, 216, 221)



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D. JUVENILES AND YOUNG ADULTS HAVE PERPETRATED MUCH  
OF THE TERRORISM, THE IDENTITY OF SOME IS KNOWN  
TO THE POLICE.

While the Commission recognizes that there has been a general history of juvenile vandalism in the community, it further recognizes that the racial and religious motivated attacks attested to during the hearings have added a more serious and dangerous dimension to the problem which has created the potential for racial tension and actual physical violence.

One Abington Township Commissioner testified "And there is, I guess you could say, about seven or eight 'bad children', and there is no other way to describe them, that is leading this charade through the neighborhood. They are more or less leading another ten to fifteen kids that seem to follow the leaders ... it is a very small hard-core minority of youths that are causing most of these problems." (Tr. November 22, 268)

The Abington Police Captain: "The youths that you are speaking of are known to us because of the numerous contacts that we have had with them over the years." (Tr. November 23, 15)



E. ABINGTON POLICE REQUIRE TECHNICAL AND HUMAN RELATIONS TRAINING TO DEAL WITH ACTS OF TERRORISM DIRECTED AGAINST MINORITIES.

One Abington Township Commissioner admitted: "The thought occurred that perhaps our police could use some more human relations training". Another Township Commissioner testified: "In fact, I have always committed myself to the concept that we do need some human relations training within the Department, and I do think that it should be mandatory." (Tr. November 22, 264, 346)

The Commission found that those police efforts that were made to relieve or protect the victims of the racially and religiously motivated attacks were often thwarted for a number of reasons. The Abington Police Captain testified that the known vandals in the community recognize even the unmarked police cars and utilize radio scanners to intercept police messages enabling the vandals to anticipate police approach and flee. In one instance despite the fact that the residence of one Black family was under police surveillance and "protection," extensive damage was possible by vandals." (Tr. November 22, 92, 169-170, 323-324; November 23, 25-26, 52-54)

The Commission has also found some fundamental problems in the functioning of the Abington Police Department which have exacerbated an already tense and dangerous situation.

The Abington area District Justice testified that there was a failure on the part of the police to sufficiently inform him as to the racial nature of certain cases that have come before him. The police reports in Abington Township do not adequately reflect the racial motivation involved in many of the incidents. (Tr. November 23, 74-76)



The Commission has found an appalling lack of coordination between the police department and the Montgomery County District Attorney's Office in attempts to prosecute those persons charged with serious racial or religious motivated incidents. In most cases, even those involving serious offenses such as aggravated assault and battery, the police patrolman would prosecute the accused. The Commission found that neither the police nor other Township officials discharged their responsibility by assuring that the District Attorney's Office was notified of these matters and by attempting to guarantee that the interests of the Commonwealth were adequately represented at hearings involving serious incidents of racially motivated violence.

Such practices, the Commission believes, do not adequately protect the rights of all Commonwealth citizens to a community and an atmosphere free from the fear of racial violence, harassment and terrorism.

(Tr. November 23, 79-83)



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F. BLACKS ARE UNDER-REPRESENTED IN THE ABINGTON TOWNSHIP  
POLICE DEPARTMENT AND NO AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAM  
EXISTS TO CORRECT THIS CONDITION.

There is a need to review the employment policies of the Abington Police force which at the time of the hearings employed three Black officers in a force of 86 officers. Blacks represented over 6% of the population of Abington Township while only representing about 3% of the officers on the police force. This continues despite the filling of recent vacancies in the Police Department. (Tr. November 22, 167; November 23, 68-69)



G. BLACK FAMILIES CONTINUE TO MOVE INTO SECTIONS OF ABINGTON, INCLUDING ROSLYN, WHICH HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN VIRTUALLY ALL WHITE.

Some residents and community leaders testified as to their beliefs and perceptions that unethical real estate practices such as panic selling and steering have contributed to the extraordinarily rapid increase of Black families in Roslyn. However, there was also testimony which basically demonstrated efforts by the Eastern Montgomery County licensed real estate brokers and salespersons and especially the Montgomery County Board of Realtors in connection with their written Memorandum of Understanding with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission to increase housing opportunities for Blacks and other minorities.

It was clear to the staff as they commenced the preliminary work, and it became clear to the Commissioners during the course of the hearing, that because of the limitations of time there were some aspects of the problem which could not be explored fully at this hearing -- such things as school segregation, housing segregation and the practices of the real estate industry which have contributed to community instability and resentment.

Many witnesses however did testify regarding their beliefs that certain practices of the real estate industry in the community were contributing to the general atmosphere of racial tension and hostility. One of the Township Commissioners related the historical basis of some of the racial tensions involved in the housing situation in Roslyn.

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Township Commissioner: "You have to realize that I would say probably 50 to 60 percent of the people who live in Roslyn and not in Crestmont area, in the Roslyn area, which was built after 1950, I would say 50 to 60 percent of those people are people who lived in Mount Airy, West Germantown or West Oak Lane, and 15 to 20 years ago they moved because the neighborhood was changing. I think I indicated to you earlier that I think a lot of these youths -- and I do believe it is youths ... are sitting around their dinner table listening to their parents relate stories about when they moved out of West Oak Lane because the Blacks had taken over the community and, you know, seeing all of the things that happened down there in that community. You know, I moved out here because of West Oak Lane, the problem had arisen again ... The Blacks were taking over the community so, you know, the whole community moved. But I think these children are hearing these things from their parents who are saying things like, 'I don't think they are going to chase us out of our neighborhood!' And so forth and so on. They are not retaliating or not clipping against their people who live in Crestmont, because the people in Crestmont were living here before the people from East Germantown moved in that area. I mean, the section is Black and has always been Black since, I guess, the inception of the Township." (Tr. November 22, 240-241)

Another Township Commissioner commented on the housing situation:  
"I recently circulated a letter to my constituents telling them in effect, and to these words, 'Blacks do not ruin neighborhoods, what ruins neighborhoods is White's panicking and selling and moving out!' "  
(Tr. November 22, 214)



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The Commission found that the number of Black families has increased dramatically in the past two years, from 5 - 10 to 50 - 100 families. One official stated his belief that one of the prime problems in Roslyn was certain practices in the local real estate community. He testified as follows:

"Finally, I think that I have felt for a while that one of the big problems in Roslyn is the behavior of the real estate profession in Roslyn. I think many, many people are very concerned and there have been many charges in the past that realtors are not acting in totally ethical fashion. There are charges of blockbusting and racial steering. There is no question that there is an extraordinary number of for sale signs and sold signs in Roslyn. I am of the belief that that kind of excessive solicitation and use of for sale signs doesn't help a community when it is going through integration. I think it simply adds to the tension and adds to the frustration in the community. The excessive use of for sale signs continues in Roslyn. Sold signs are up for long periods of time after homes are sold and I find it is not helping the situation any in our community because of these activities." This same Township official went on to testify:

"I think that those new Black residents of Roslyn are targeted because they are new Black and they are moving into an area that has been formerly White. I think that there is no question about that at all." (Tr. November 22, 15, 20)

The President of the Eastern Montgomery County Board of Realtors testified regarding the housing situation by reflecting the concern of the board over the racial tension in the community contributed to



by the fear among White residents that White families are not moving into the area and the difficulty in selling houses in Roslyn and other parts of Abington to White families attributed to the changing racial balance in the area.

The increase in real estate sales represented an increase in housing opportunities for Blacks. However, because of the limited nature of this inquiry the Commission did not explore in any depth such practices as illegal solicitation or panic selling. (Tr. November 23, 96)

H. THE HUMAN RELATIONS ASPECTS OF THE ABINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT CURRICULUM, TEACHER TRAINING AND STUDENT DISCIPLINE CODE REQUIRE RE-EVALUATION.

A Black high school counselor testified that there is a particular need for more communication between Black and White students at earlier ages. From the Black community's perspective, the Willow Grove NAACP President testified that there is little Black history being taught in this district. She also pointed out that the symbolism of the Ku Klux Klan has appeared in a school in Montgomery County and she confirms the vandalism and terrorism testified to in the hearing. (Tr. November 21, 28)

A Black high school counselor testified that the biggest problem at the high school level in Abington this year has been racial slurs and name calling, not only against Black students, but against Jewish students as well. The President of the local NAACP testified that the problem of unfair discipline of Black children in the public schools still has not been resolved. (Tr. November 21, 27, 28)

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I. MINORITY-GROUP EDUCATORS ARE UNDER-REPRESENTED IN THE ABINGTON TOWNSHIP PUBLIC AND PAROCHIAL SCHOOL SYSTEMS.

In a school district as bi-racial and multi-religious as Abington, only 4% of the teachers and three out of 18 principals are Black, reported the Co-Chairperson of the Abington Human Relations Advisory Council. A Black guidance counselor testified that there are no Black or Jewish administrators or Black department heads at the high school level. He added that staff committees of the school district lack the participation of their Black staff. "... (T)here has been no real gain in Black administration and teachers in the school district", according to the President of the Willow Grove Chapter of the NAACP. (Tr. November 21, 11)

Its priest indicated that the parish school of St. John of the Cross in Roslyn has Black students but no Black teachers. (Tr. November 22, 48)

J. MANY PUBLIC SCHOOL PUPILS LACK A MULTI-RACIAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE.

Many schools in the Abington School District have either no Black pupils or only token numbers of Black students, while others have concentrations of as much as 34% non-White enrollment. The current plans to close some elementary schools provide opportunities for reassigning pupils to correct these conditions of racial isolation and racial concentration. (Tr. November 22, 102-104)





K. THERE ARE NO INTERFAITH CLERGY GROUPS FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO SHARE THEIR CONCERN ABOUT TENSION SITUATIONS.

Testimony affirmed that there is currently no interfaith clergy group in the Abington area, and that individual members of the clergy have, for the most part, not spoken out against incidents of racial tension. The creation of an interfaith clergy group was **recommended** by the Eastern Montgomery County Division of the Jewish Community Relations Council, and Catholic clergy has indicated willingness to join such a group. (Tr. November 23, 114.



#### IV. COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

##### PENNSYLVANIA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION STATEMENT REGARDING RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission reserves the right to deal with these or any other matters relating to the subject of this hearing in the future. Nothing in connection with these recommendations is to be deemed to bar any action by any party or by the Commission pursuant to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act or the regulations promulgated thereunder.

No recommendation shall be deemed to constitute any waiver of powers or duties conferred upon the Commission or be deemed a declaration of policy or precedent by the Commission.



A. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS/SERVICES

1. Abington Township Commissioners shall establish a broad based human rights committee consisting of Township Commissioners, police, other Township officials, representatives of the Eastern Montgomery County Advisory Council to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission and community leaders. The purpose of such committee is to monitor and review on a continuing basis the racial and religious climate in Abington Township. Status reports shall be made regularly to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission.

2. Abington Township Commissioners, police, the Montgomery County District Attorney and Juvenile Court officials shall work together to apprehend and prosecute promptly those juveniles and adults who engage in overt discriminatory acts, threats and intimidation virtually amounting to terrorism. Abington Township District Justices shall be informed of such actions.

3. Abington Township shall request services of such agencies as the Pennsylvania Department of Justice, the Community Relations Service and the F.B.I. of the U.S. Department of Justice, the Civil Tension Task Force of the Governor's Office, various divisions of the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs and the Bureau of Community Services of the Pennsylvania State Police to assist in any manner in solving the tension problems existing in the Township. This shall include but not be limited to assistance in identifying, apprehending and prosecuting perpetrators.





4. Abington Township Commissioners, with the assistance of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, shall forthwith develop and implement an affirmative action program with respect to Township , municipal services and employment patterns, which will reflect the minority and female population of the township.

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## B. LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Abington Township Police Department should assume a more positive role in the community, and contribute to the reduction of tension and relief from recurring incidents of overt, racial and religious discriminatory acts, threats, intimidations and conflict. Testimony on record reveals a pattern of policy, procedure and behavior by members of the Abington Township Police Department demonstrating lack of sensitivity to the racial aspects of the problems and lack of empathy towards the Black community. Implementation of the following recommendations should be a priority toward solving the problems:

1. The Abington Township Police Department, with cooperation of the Abington Township Commissioners, shall forthwith establish a continuing police in-service Human Relations Training Program for all police at all levels. Maximum use should be made of indigenous organizations, i.e., the Black Civic Association of Abington, and individuals and local universities in the development and conduct of this program.

The police department shall take maximum advantage of the police training programs available through the Pennsylvania State Police Bureau of Community Services, U.S. Department of Justice, Community Relations Service and the Governor's Civil Tension Task Force.

2. Establish criteria in the recruitment and appointment of new police to include applicant sensitivity and empathy in dealing with minority victims of crimes.



3. Provide all law enforcement officers with adequate legal instruction on what constitutes sufficient cause to investigate and arrest and to initiate criminal prosecution. This especially relates to crimes based on racial or religious animosities.

4. Require that Township police work with the Montgomery County District Attorney's Office in the apprehension and prosecution of perpetrators of terroristic acts. Guidelines should be established to assure that the Office of the Montgomery County District Attorney is represented at all hearings involving terrorism against minorities.

5. Police reports should adequately reflect the racial motivation when it is present. This is important in enabling the District Justices to adequately assess the situation and also important to enable federal intervention for violation of civil rights.

6. Abington Township police shall be provided with a statement from the District Attorney's Office informing them of the procedure to follow in providing information on terroristic acts, including how to file written complaints and to sustain prosecution.



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## C. HOUSING

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission heard testimony from the President of the Eastern Montgomery County Board of Realtors and residents which indicated an effort by the Eastern Montgomery County licensed real estate brokers and salespersons to serve the community. However, as the hearing proceeded, it became apparent that there was a wide difference of perception between community persons and the Eastern Montgomery County licensed real estate brokers and salespersons regarding what constitutes improper solicitation. Therefore, there is need for the following recommendations:

That a Housing Task Force composed of Commission staff, realtors, brokers, Abington Township officials and community representatives be created to:

1. Implement a community complaint referral center for receiving complaints of illegal or unethical real estate practices.
2. Investigate all complaints of illegal or unethical real estate practices.
3. Implement a procedure for developing corrective or remedial action for justifiable complaints.
4. Establish a procedure to implement a community-wide housing/education program to include the following:
  - a. Township-wide distribution of such information as will:
    - (1) Make residents aware of their rights and responsibilities
    - (2) Correct misperceptions regarding such areas as
      - (a) Panic Selling
      - (b) Limitation on sales to non-minorities
      - (c) Tension areas.

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- b. Development, in coordination with the Township Commissioners of a community-wide anti-intimidation campaign.
- c. Dissemination of positive facts about the Township.
- d. Limitation of Sale/Sold signs.
- e. Limitation of solicitation in sensitive areas.
- f. Development of on-going forum for discussions of housing problems.



D. SCHOOLS/EDUCATION

The alleged perpetrators of the harassment and tension included Abington Township area school age youth. A major influence on these youth and their attitudes and behavior toward minority-group persons are the school systems they attend. Both public and non-public schools share a responsibility for affecting these developing patterns of relationships. Fortunately, there are practical things that can be done by educators, both church related and otherwise, utilizing agencies with resources to aid in the task.

A. The Superintendent of the Abington School District shall:

1. Evaluate and revise the school district's program of curriculum and in-service training of professional and non-professional staff regarding minority groups and intergroup education concepts, as a result of consulting the --

(a) State Department of Education's  
Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity,

(b) Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission's  
Division of Education,

(c) Abington School Human Relations Advisory  
Council, and the

(d) Eastern Montgomery County Advisory Council to  
the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission.

This revision should include focus on --

(a) The need for more communication between  
pupils of different races at the earlier  
grade levels.

(b) The historical role of terrorist groups  
in denying civil rights of Blacks and other  
minorities, and

(c) The history and contributions of Blacks  
and other minorities.

2. Deliver to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission a copy, on or before June 1, 1978, of such revised program.





B. The Abington School District shall:

1. Consider making revisions in their student discipline code and in their staff discipline policies to deal with verbal attacks against students or staff of any race or religion.
2. Deliver to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, on or before June 1, 1978, a copy of such revised codes and policies.

C. The Abington School District shall:

1. Consult the Abington School Human Relations Advisory Council, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, and the State Department of Education's Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity, regarding affirmative action steps to take to increase the number of Black and Jewish school administrators and teachers, and to achieve greater involvement of Black staff in school district staff committees.
2. Deliver to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission for approval, on or before June 1, 1978, the resultant affirmative action plan for employment.

D. The Abington School District shall submit to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission its plan to utilize the opportunity of school closings and pupil reassignments to increase the learning together contacts of elementary and middle-grade Black and White pupils.

E. The Philadelphia Archdiocese Superintendent of Schools shall:

1. Evaluate and revise their employment practices and programs of classroom instruction and in-service training of professional and non-professional staff regarding minority groups and intergroup education concepts, after consultation with the:

(a) Cardinal's Commission on Human Relations,

(b) Mary Dennis Donovan, C.S.J., recent Director of Human Relations Education, Catholic Schools, Diocese of Pittsburgh,

(c) Eastern Montgomery County Advisory Council to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission.

(d) Abington School Human Relations Advisory Council,

(e) State Department of Education's Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity,



(f) Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission's  
Division of Education.

2. Deliver to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission on or before June 1, 1978, a copy of the revised practices and programs.



#### E. COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

1. That the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission's Eastern Montgomery County Advisory Council, with the assistance of the Eastern Montgomery Division of the Jewish Community Relations Council, initiate expansion and reorganization of an interfaith clergy group representing Catholic, Protestant and Jewish churches, synagogues and schools, including Black churches, to aid clergy and their religious institutions in playing their full role in speaking out on issues of interracial and interreligious tension.

2. The youth programs sponsored by the Police Athletic League, churches, settlement houses and any others should be contacted for whatever assistance they can provide with the cooperation and assistance of the Abington Township Police and Township Commissioners.

3. The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission shall, through existing organizations such as the Cardinal's Commission on Human Relations, the Metropolitan Council of Churches, and the Board of Rabbis, and in concert across denominational lines, request clergy collectively to address themselves to these human relations problems of Abington. An effective organization of religious leaders should be established to provide assistance.



## F. GENERAL

Throughout the hearing testimony there was reference to repeated incidents of harassment, intimidation and damage to property. There is a need for local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to cooperate and combine efforts to identify, apprehend and prosecute those who violate the laws.

1. Recommendations to eliminate racial and religious overt discriminatory acts, intimidation and threats:
  - (a) Federal and state levels: Increased joint federal and state action to identify, apprehend and prosecute persons violating the civil rights of individuals or criminal laws.
  - (b) Federal level: Refer reports to the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division requesting investigation by the F.B.I. of discriminatory racial and religious incidents described in the testimony.
  - (c) State level: Refer report to the Pennsylvania State Police requesting that it make available to Abington Township Police its resources to investigate overt criminal acts and conspiracy; and to offer the services and programs of its community relations staff to the Abington Police for sensitivity training.
2. Refer Investigatory Hearing report to the Governor's Office and Legislators representing Montgomery County requesting legislation, as follows:
  - (a) To amend the Pennsylvania Crime Code to provide:
    - (1) Misdemeanor penalties for acts of intimidation and threats based upon race, color, religious creed, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, handicap and disability in connection with the acquisition, use and enjoyment of housing (comparable to Title IX of the 1968 Civil Rights Act) and public accommodations.





(2) Authorization for the Pennsylvania State Police to investigate complaints of racial and religious overt discriminatory acts, threats and intimidation and to allow the State Department of Justice to replace the local District Attorney to prosecute such unlawful acts where local police and District Attorney fail to act promptly.

(b) To amend the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act to make it unlawful to harass, threaten, harm, damage or otherwise penalize any person with respect to the acquisition, disposition, use and enjoyment of housing and public accommodations.



## V. CONCLUSION

The programs and activities recommended in this report calls for great effort on the part of local officials and township residents alike. However, unless township government concerns itself with these problems, and unless a new resolve to confront and remedy the tensions and human problems existing throughout the community is formed by all residents, Abington Township will continue to experience racial tensions.

The report strongly urges all citizens of Abington Township to undertake a new commitment to their community and to work in partnership among themselves and with their elected representatives to resolve their differences and create a unified, progressive community. Agencies of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are available to assist Abington Township officials to achieve the goals described in this report.





















